Global Trade Talks at Seattle

1129. SHRI SANATAN BISI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the approach to maximise benefits and minimise losses in the global trade talks at Seattle proved to be a sound package deal for India; and

(b) if so, what are the details?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) India has participated effectively in the deliberations of the various Working Groups as were formed as a part of the Conference process at the Third Ministerial Conference at Seattle. India had particularly highlighted the implementation issues relating to the existence of asymmetries and imbalances in the various WTO agreements and also the non realisation of the expected benefits by the developing countries in general and India in particular. The upfront addressal of 'Implementation Issues' comprised the core proactive agenda of India. India has also resolutely opposed the inclusion of non-trade issues like core labour standards in the agenda of the WTO. This was fully in line with the Prime Minister's statement made in Lok Sabha on 1st December 1999. However, as no consensus-based conclusion could be reached on most of the issues before the Ministerial Conference and work of the Ministerial Conference was suspended, India would renew its efforts to defend its national interest when the work of the Ministerial Conference is resumed.

Industrial growth

1130. DR. MOHAN BABU: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been a negative industrial growth during the last few years;

(b) if so, whether Government have identified the sectors where the growth has been very poor or stagnant; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to accelerate the Industrial growth rate?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) No Sir, the overall growth rates of Industrial Production during 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99 were 5.6%, 6.6% and 4.0% respectively.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) The steps taken to improve industrial production, interalia, are:

1. special package announced for revival of growth in exports;
2. repeal of ULCRA and incentive to house ownership;
3. the Government has allowed buy back of shares and inter-corporate loans to boost investment and revive the capital market;
4. a new power policy announced;
5. excise duties rationalized;
6. income tax rate and custom duties on infrastructure projects reduced;
7. liberalization of inflow of FDI/NRI/OCB investment and the guidelines for foreign equity investment in NBFC have further been modified;
8. setting up of Foreign Investment Implementation Authority (FIIA) to provide single point *interface* between foreign investors and Government machinery;
9. setting up of National Accreditation Boards including a National Patent Office and a National Benchmarking Patent House to promote integration of best practices in the Indian Industry;
10. restoration of 100% MODVAT credit;
11. reduction in CRR;
12. withdrawal of interest rate surcharge on import finance.

Export of Tea

1131. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) what is the export of tea, both in quantity and value, during January to September, 1999;

(b) how it compares with the same period during 1997 and 1998;

(c) the reasons for fall in tea export; and